

The Skills Centre Ltd

Employer Engagement Practice

1. Introduction and Policy

This document details how we work with employers to support their apprentices to thrive and benefit fully from the opportunity they have been presented with. We prioritise close links with employers to ensure the right flow of information to deliver development of provision, to maintain supportive 'wrap-around' services to aid retention and achievement, and to deliver the right apprenticeship journey.

Employer engagement is led by our General Manager, John White, who has over 30 years of experience in working with employers including to develop and deliver training, managing teams delivering to employers, and ensuring curricula include information provided by employers. Other staff lead on the quality and communications components of this.

This document should be read alongside our Employer Engagement Policy which provides a high-level strategic overview and set of principles.

2. Purpose

This document sets out key elements of our employer-facing apprenticeship practice, including how we include them in the planning and delivery of apprenticeships, how we ensure we have up-to-date industry information to enrich course content, and how we communicate with them on apprentices' progress.

3. Employer Commitment

The Skills Centre's apprenticeship team sign up to an employer commitment, which commits them to:

- Take a quality-led approach, ensuring that all benefit fully from activities
- Provide such support as employers need to deliver their elements of provision

- Deliver all activities according to the agreement, including delivering against the agreed timetable, to agreed standards and through named and qualified people
- Provide monitoring and performance reviews to ensure apprentices are progressing appropriately, and provide mechanisms for both employer and apprentice to raise any issues
- Provide off-the-job training in a form that fits employer and job needs
- Ensure end point assessments are provided by an independent organisation and in a way that fits employer resource availability

4. The Agreement

We sign tri-partite agreements with employers and apprentices to formalise the relationship and all elements of delivery. These agreements are written in Crystal Mark English to ensure they are easily understood and both employer and apprentice are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.

5. Marketing

We undertake a range of marketing activities to ensure employers are brought into the provision in an appropriate way and informed on the activities that will be required as well as potential benefits. In all cases our marketing is delivered in forms that fit the needs of employers, emphasising brevity and quick transfer of key information. We publicise specific apprenticeship opportunities through the range of measures detailed below.

We use specific contact means to promote apprenticeships including our website, business intermediary organisations, the apprenticeship finder service, FAT, social media (this is not regularly used for our core customers), and others according to the needs of the specific opportunity and the culture of the sector it sits within.

We deliver communications against a set of quality metrics, including answering the phone within 10 seconds, ensuring 'right first time' resolution and following up within a notified timeframe. Those with responsibility for answering the phone have an internal directory to help them direct queries from employers and others.

We undertake face-to-face marketing of opportunities to larger employers and existing customers where we are familiar with their needs and the apprenticeships they have previously offered. We maintain a CRM database of all past and present customers, including information on apprenticeship needs and interests, and all have given permission for their data to be stored and used for the purposes of marketing. We keep all data in accordance with GDPR principles.

We work to a Communications Plan which provides both a strategic overview and specific actions towards employer communications. This is reviewed annually according to our usual process.

6. Satisfaction Metric

We are committed to delivering services to employers' satisfaction. We conduct an annual employer satisfaction survey through our quality team and have implemented a 90% rating for 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' returns. Where employers report satisfaction below this level we implement a recovery plan, interviewing them in more detail to understand the reasons why and populating the recovery plan and an associated action plan. This is then delivered and satisfaction re-surveyed at the end of this process.

7. Quality

All of our staff are appropriately skilled and experienced to deliver the work they do. We aim to ensure that employers receive the best-possible service and to provide improvement activities to deliver against this commitment. Our employer engagement team have many years' combined experience; account managers are experienced in information transfer, satisfaction surveys and recovery and wider support; all staff are provided with a full performance management service by their line managers (assisted by the quality team) including observations, feedback loops (formal and informal), performance appraisals and associated improvement and development plans.

Our quality processes are further set out in our Quality Handbook, and this demonstrates the mechanisms through which we improve provision including through employer-responsive processes. Continuous quality improvement is part of our offer to employers.

8. Curriculum Design

We deliver employer-focused provision, using a range of processes to enrich each curriculum and ensuring each meets the specific needs of the employer as well as the learner. It is vital that the apprenticeship content development/delivery process reflects the needs of both, and the employer contributes through reviewing progress (including at meetings and using the recording processes), supporting the advice and guidance process, supporting training delivery including ensuring OTJ time is timetabled, providing updated job and sector-specific information, and agreeing the individual learning plan including committing to their own actions.

9. Complaints

We have a complaints procedure that covers employers. This includes escalation processes for when a first line complaint cannot be resolved, right up to our Director who can also call on independent investigators in case of further dispute. The complaints process is referenced in the agreement, with information on how to access it and utilise it. Complaints data and specific qualitative feedback from the process are reviewed by our quality manager and fed into our continuous improvement mechanism. The quality manager also provides the first stage of the resolution process, including meeting with complainants, action planning towards a resolution, and providing ongoing communications to keep them informed of progression of the complaint.